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Mrs Angela Clarke  
Headteacher  
Ashbrook Infant School  
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Dear Mrs Clarke

### **Short inspection of Ashbrook Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2013.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and other members of the senior team have worked hard to build and maintain a dedicated team of staff who strive to improve their practice and to do the very best for the children in their care. Your ethos of 'We care, we learn, we have fun' is evident throughout the school. Staff value pupils' work and efforts, and motivate them to seek further success. As a result, pupils are happy and keen to learn. Almost all of the parents I spoke with, and those who replied to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were full of praise for the way staff ensure that pupils 'have fun while they are learning'. Many highlighted how well and quickly their children settle into the school and how approachable and caring teachers are. Parents also praise your leadership and commitment to ensuring that their children attend a 'friendly, nurturing school'. The great majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

Pupils enjoy school. They speak enthusiastically about their learning and they appreciate the help and support that they receive from teachers. They benefit from a wide variety of visitors, visits, including to different places of worship, and extra-curricular activities such as clubs. Some pupils have trained to become 'digital leaders' so they can help other pupils and teachers use computer technology more effectively. The school's curriculum is planned to develop pupils' resilience and persistence; one pupil said, 'We keep on trying and it gets easier.' Behaviour is good around the school and in lessons. Pupils get on well with each other, valuing

each other's similarities and differences.

You know the school very well. Your rigorous self-evaluation has enabled you to identify the right priorities for improvement. Actions in the school's development plan are well chosen. You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at your previous inspection. Teaching assistants have improved their skills as a result of well-targeted professional development and they are actively involved in supporting the learning of all pupils throughout the school. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers during lessons and begin tasks quickly because teachers' explanations are clear.

Standards in writing for pupils in Year 2 have improved and, in 2016, matched those of pupils nationally. Pupils in key stage 1 are developing a pleasant handwriting style and the current work in their books shows they have a secure grasp of grammar, punctuation and spelling for their age. They make good progress from their starting points at the beginning of Year 1. You recognise that some children in the early years have not made as much progress with their writing and reading as you expected this year and that more should be reaching the expected standard.

Governors are enthusiastic and supportive. They visit the school regularly to check on aspects of the school's work. They produce reports that are discussed at meetings of the governing body but they do not always follow up and rigorously check on the impact of leaders' actions. You provide the governing body with a comprehensive range of understandable information about the school. Currently, however, governors do not challenge you enough about this information so that they can hold you to account and contribute to further improvement.

You work collaboratively with schools that are part of a local teaching school alliance. This enables you, other leaders and staff to share their expertise with others and to learn from effective practice elsewhere.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Your commitment to keeping children safe has ensured that staff in the school are fully aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that the school is a safe and caring environment for pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. You are tenacious in ensuring that pupils receive the help and support they need in a timely manner. All staff have regular and up-to-date training to understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. As a result, they are vigilant and are clear about what they should do if they have a concern.

Leaders and the governing body ensure that there are robust systems in place for recruitment and induction of new staff. You undertake regular safeguarding audits and use these to improve your practice further. You involve governors closely in this so that the governing body can check that the school is doing what it should.

Pupils say they feel safe and the vast majority of parents who spoke to me, or who responded to the online survey, agree that the school keeps its pupils safe. Pupils say they know who to talk to if they have a problem and they are confident that any issues, including bullying, will be dealt with promptly and well. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe as part of the school's curriculum. This includes teaching pupils to use the internet safely and the school has provided a range of information for parents on this topic. They welcome the guidance, with one parent commenting that it 'helps us to be more aware'.

## **Inspection findings**

- Over time, pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 has been broadly average. In 2016, the progress of pupils from their starting points was below that found nationally and fewer pupils than might be expected reached the higher levels. You recognised this was because, although most pupils were reading the words accurately, they were not fully understanding what they had read. You have changed the way that you teach reading and teachers now ask pupils probing questions to gauge their comprehension and so offer additional support where needed. As a result, more pupils are reaching the higher levels this year.
- Throughout the school, most children read fluently and with expression suited to their age, but some lower-attaining pupils rely too heavily on sounding words out letter by letter. This impedes their fluency and their understanding of what they read. You had already noted this and are working with staff to ensure that pupils move on from this strategy more quickly.
- You have worked hard to raise the profile of reading within the school. Pupils appreciate the welcoming library area and opportunities such as Bug Club, and say they enjoy reading. Staff and volunteers hear pupils read as often as possible, both individually and during guided reading sessions. You encourage pupils to read with an adult at home and many do, although there is a lack of support among some parents for developing this vital skill. You have already started working with parents to ensure that they are playing a full part in helping to improve their child's learning.
- Standards for boys and disadvantaged pupils were not as high as expected in 2016. You have reviewed how you are using the pupil premium funding and have made changes to the way you support this group of pupils. The leader of this provision works closely with class teachers to ensure that day-to-day teaching is more effectively matched to pupils' learning needs. She also provides additional individual and group support where necessary. As a result, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are now making much better progress and reaching higher standards than previously. Strategies to improve outcomes for boys, such as opportunities for role play and oral rehearsal of what they intend to write, have been equally successful. Some pupils in Year 1, for example, were presenting an imaginative puppet show version of Jack and the Beanstalk. Others were selecting and using props to rehearse the action and another group were writing their own version of the story.

- The proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development has been broadly average for some time. In 2016, however, this dipped to below the national average and standards have fallen further this year. Many of this current group of children had low starting points and your assessment information shows that most are making good progress. You have identified that those who enter the Reception class with skills that are well below those expected for their age are not making rapid enough progress to reach the early learning goals. This is particularly true for boys' literacy skills. Since you introduced new strategies last Easter, this group has begun to make accelerated progress and you plan to introduce these changes much earlier next year. The teaching of writing is not rigorous enough, particularly in developing letter formation and in tackling errors in spelling quickly. Teachers do not provide frequent enough opportunities for pupils to practise spelling words that do not follow a phonic pattern, and you plan to remedy this in the autumn.
- Pupils' attendance dipped in 2016 and was below the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils was particularly low. Information for the current school year shows that attendance has improved overall and is now close to the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also improved but is still low. Your actions, including contacting parents on the first day of absence, work with specific families and the involvement of other agencies, are beginning to make a positive difference but this group of pupils still does not attend school as regularly as other pupils do.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make more extensive use of the full range of phonics approaches in the early years classes, and focus consistently on letter formation and spelling, in order to raise attainment in reading and writing, particularly for boys
- staff consistently work with parents and other agencies to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- governors provide robust challenges to enable the governing body to hold school leaders to account.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I visited all classes with you to observe teaching, learning and assessment. We also checked pupils' progress in their workbooks and folders. We discussed the school's effectiveness and the actions taken to ensure the school's continued improvement. I heard pupils read from the Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 2.

I met with the leaders for literacy and the early years, the pupil premium leader and a governor. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I talked with a group of pupils from Year 2 and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. I met with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day.

I reviewed a range of documents, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's improvement plans and external evaluations of the school's work. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding systems, records and associated documents. I checked assessment information on how well pupils are achieving. I also read minutes of meetings of the governing body. I considered 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), 22 free-text comments from parents and two responses from staff.